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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 26, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As members of your Administration prepare to meet with People's Republic of China (PRC) Foreign Minister and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Foreign Affairs Commission Director Wang Yi, I urge you to ensure that the conversation focuses on two of the most pressing challenges currently facing the United States: the fentanyl crisis and the ongoing conflict between Israel and terrorist groups like Hamas.

As you know, overdose deaths, particularly among young people, are increasing across our Nation due to the ongoing fentanyl crisis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that, from May 2022 to May 2023, more than 112,000 people died from a drug overdose, including over 78,000 from synthetic opioids other than methadone.<sup>1</sup> This is an increase from the nearly 107,000 drug overdose deaths reported by the CDC in 2021.<sup>2</sup> As of October 2023, law enforcement agencies have seized over 55 million pills of fentanyl this year and more than 9,000 pounds of fentanyl powder.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, according to an analysis reported in September 2023, accidental drug overdoses were the largest cause of death for people under 40-years-old in Pennsylvania in 2022.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, accidental overdoses became the top cause of death for people under 40 in 13 states, and it is now the top cause in 37 states.<sup>5</sup>

To stop the flow of fentanyl into American communities, we must stop it at the source. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), prior to 2020, China was the primary source for all fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances trafficked into the United States.<sup>6</sup> In May 2019, the Chinese government imposed stricter regulations in an attempt to crack down on the production and sale of fentanyl, but these regulations have merely shifted the production of fentanyl outside of China. While Mexican transnational cartels, such as the Sinaloa and Jalisco cartels, are now the largest producers of illicit fentanyl in the United States, these cartels rely

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dea-seized-over-55-million-fentanyl-pills-so-far-in-2023-garland-says/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.penncapital-star.com/health-care/death-rates-for-people-under-40-have-skyrocketed-blame-fentanyl/>

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/DEA\\_GOV\\_DIR-008-20%20Fentanyl%20Flow%20in%20the%20United%20States\\_0.pdf](https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/DEA_GOV_DIR-008-20%20Fentanyl%20Flow%20in%20the%20United%20States_0.pdf)

heavily on Chinese-sourced chemicals and ingredients, known as fentanyl precursors, to manufacture illicit fentanyl to traffic into the United States.

I applaud you and your Administration for the steps that you have taken to address precursor fentanyl trafficking from China, including adding the PRC to the U.S. list of the world's major illicit drug-producing and drug-transit countries,<sup>7</sup> but we must do more. That is why I was pleased that the Fentanyl Eradication and Narcotics Deterrence (FEND) Off Fentanyl Act was included in the Senate-passed FY24 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).<sup>8</sup> Among other things, this bill would declare the international trafficking of fentanyl to be a national emergency, and it would enhance current law so that the federal government can better combat illicit opioid supply chains by imposing tough sanctions on transnational organizations, such as those operating in China and Mexico. I will continue to fight to include the FEND Off Fentanyl Act in the final NDAA that comes out of conference, and I urge you to sign it into law if given the opportunity.

Furthermore, I encourage your Administration to impress upon Foreign Minister Yi the importance of China's cooperation in addressing the ongoing fentanyl crisis and precursor trafficking. As Dr. Rahul Gupta, Director of National Drug Control Policy, wrote last year, there are common-sense measures that the PRC can take to address the global trafficking of fentanyl and fentanyl precursors. Such steps include implementing know-your-customer standards to prevent the diversion of chemicals to illicit drug manufacturing, properly labeling chemical shipments through enforcement of World Customs Organization standards, and monitoring for the diversion of uncontrolled chemicals and equipment in international flow.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, I understand that in June 2023, the Chinese government indicated that it was in the process of scheduling three additional fentanyl precursors. It is critical for the PRC to engage with the United States and take the steps necessary to combat the fentanyl crisis, and I urge your Administration to press Foreign Minister Yi for updates on its efforts, including scheduling additional fentanyl precursors.

The second issue I request be raised with Foreign Minister Yi is the recent escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict. I am encouraged that the Chinese government has reiterated its support for a two-state solution to bring a lasting peace to the region. However, over the last several weeks, Foreign Minister Yi has failed to condemn Hamas' horrific slaughter of civilians and taking of hostages. I wholeheartedly agree with your description of the Hamas' attacks as "pure unadulterated evil" and believe it necessary for China to recognize and condemn that evil—both to acknowledge the suffering of Hamas' victims and their families, and to enable frank cooperation on a two-state solution after Israel has destroyed Hamas' military capacity.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/09/15/memorandum-on-presidential-determination-on-major-drug-transit-or-major-illicit-drug-producing-countries-for-fiscal-year-2024/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1271/>;  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2226>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-should-rejoin-the-u-s-in-the-fentanyl-fight-synthetic-drugs-opioid-trade-imports-beijing-crime-violence-corruption-11661199859>

Foreign Minister Yi also recently stated that, “Israel’s actions have gone beyond the scope of self-defense.”<sup>10</sup> Any country whose citizens are brutally attacked, kidnapped, and murdered by a terrorist group should be able to respond in full force. As you have acknowledged, Israel must adhere to international humanitarian law in its engagements; but Hamas’ military tactics of killing civilians and hiding behind hostages clearly violate such law, and China is hypocritical to not say so. To criticize Israel’s defensive response without first criticizing Hamas’ indiscriminate slaughter of the innocent not only discredits China’s ambitions of moral leadership on the global stage, but also plays into Hamas’ strategy to turn the international community against Israel and its right to defend itself.

In conversations with Foreign Minister Yi, I ask that your representatives impress upon him the importance of denouncing Hamas’ acts of terrorism against Israel and its military tactics of hiding behind civilians in violation of international law. I also urge that your representatives request Foreign Minister Yi to call on Hamas to release its remaining hostages.

Thank you and your Administration for taking into consideration these requests.

Sincerely,

  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

cc: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan  
Secretary of State Antony Blinken

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<sup>10</sup> <https://time.com/6325352/china-israel-hamas-war/>